

AUG 27 1960

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Mrs. Downey Back; Saw Son In Peiping Jail

Her long pilgrimage ended, Mrs. Mary Downey arrived home yesterday from Peiping where she was granted five brief visits with her son in a Red Chinese prison.

John Downey, now thirty, was one of two civilians riding in an Air Force plane forced down over North Korea in 1952. Convicted of espionage, he was sentenced to life imprisonment.

His mother, a sixth-grade teacher in New Britain, Conn., traveled to see him once before, in 1958. On her recent journey Mrs. Downey stayed two weeks in Peiping and was allowed to see her son five times, for two on each occasion. She brought him sugar, salami, cigarettes, T-shirts and books. Of his jailers she said: "They were wonderful to me . . . the kindest people I ever met."

Mrs. Downey left Hong Kong Thursday and arrived here from San Francisco at 7:15 a. m. yesterday. At Idlewild Airport she said she had been given no indication that her son might be released, but later in the day, in New Britain, she said a Chinese Red Cross official told her Mr. Downey may eventually be released for good behavior. At present he shares a cell with two other prisoners, a Russian and a Chinese.